

PORTRAIT OF GSA'S HEAD

CIR

Simple Approach in Big Affairs

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John L. Moore probably has more to do and less to say about Washington, D. C., than any other member of the new Kennedy administration.

This unobtrusive, former university vice president and football coach will influence traffic patterns, highway construction, housing, renewal and parking in the national capital metropolitan area.

All this, not because such complicated urban problems are his responsibilities, but because they are linked inescapably to his job. He is the chief supply officer of the multibillion dollar business of the Federal Government.

As General Services Administrator, he outfits Federal employees. He finds space for them. He supervises design and construction of Federal buildings. He disposes of surplus property and stockpiles equipment that may have a public use.

If he can raze unsightly temporary buildings in the Federal City, the community and its tourists may be even more grateful for green vistas than Government workers for evacuation from cramped quarters.

The shape of the Federal community sets the pattern for growth of the metropolis of Washington and surrounding suburbs of Maryland and Virginia, in a way unique among American cities.

Impact on the District

GSA administrators generally are a little dazed to learn of the tremendous impact of their activities on the District of Columbia. There is a temptation to ignore, or at least make very secondary, the purely local problems. Mr. Moore is approaching this peculiar area with more caution and less speed than has been characteristic of most New Frontiersmen tackling new responsibilities.

He declined to grant an interview to talk over the influence of his office on the city. This was in line with his decision to hold press conferences from time to time, but to talk to no newspaper representatives individually.

But he answered questions in writing. Cheerfully, he interrupted a conference in his office to explain this seemed more efficient.

Both his answers and his methods indicated he is a man who will rely heavily on his staff unless he personally convinces him self staff approaches are in error.



JOHN L. MOORE

A lot to do about a lot of things.

He is slow to make promises he does not know he can keep, quick to trust judgments of specialists with experience. He is willing to explore new ways of working within the frame erected by law, but unwilling to alter the frame until he has tested its efficiency.

He seems more a plodder than a plunger, more an organizer than an initiator.

"Unightly" was Mr. Moore's word to describe the temporary, frame buildings lining the Mall, adjoining ridges and Independence avenues N.W. He said the

GSA would rid Washington of tempos, but he promised no timetable.

Washington leaders have sought a pledge that tempos will be demolished as soon as employees now working in them are moved to new buildings under construction or on drawing boards. Congress agreed by ordering the GSA to tear down, foot by foot, temporary space taken by Central Intelligence Agency employees as soon as they are given equal space in the new CIA headquarters due for completion next fall in Fairfax County, Va.

Mr. Moore did not go that far.

As new Federal buildings are completed we would hope to eliminate the balance of tempos," he said. "Naturally, the speed with which we can accomplish the demolition, before, of necessity, they are eliminated to clear sites for public projects, or before additional Federal building gets underway, will be influenced by the size of the Federal population we must house in the interim and the relocations we must accomplish as some of the scheduled public works projects progress."

Mr. Moore already has moved to try to alleviate parking problems of Federal employees. He set up a committee of representatives of 25 major departments and agencies. The newest idea this group will study is creation of a revolving fund fed by fees charged for parking on some 11,400 Government-controlled spaces downtown. Added parking facilities would be built with the fund.

This idea will be implemented only if four other more conventional schemes fail to meet parking space needs, according to Mr. Moore. These four are expanded use of mass transit, increased car pooling, more fringe parking and rate adjustments from private lot owners for space needed by Federal employees.

"We are proceeding to investigate, and, to the extent possible, implement these recommendations first," Mr. Moore disclosed. "After we have gone as far as we can in this direction—and if a Federal space need still exists—we will reconsider other recommendations, including that of financing new lots through a revolving fund."

Surplus Property Disposal

Mr. Moore was less precise about how the Government gears disposal of surplus property to community needs. Disposals pose a growing problem because the Federal Government is pulling out of more and more defense installations rendered obsolete by technological advances.

Former GSA Administrator

in his final months in office over a possible need to create a new agency to make sure disposals were managed without waste. He said he would like to see local communication.

"From my observations, I would say that GSA, even at the present time, gives very serious consideration to the wishes and plans of a community in disposing of surplus Government property," Mr. Moore said.

Naval Weapons Plant

Cases is point in Washington have been the Naval Weapons Plant due to be vacated by the Navy in 1962 and Bolling Air Force Base, where activities are being shifted to Air Force Base.

Mr. Moore did not go into plans for either of these properties.

But he did say, "I have spent much of my initial weeks with this agency reviewing with representatives of various communities just this type of situation. We want to know their plans and we want to work with them."

Shortly after the written interview with Mr. Moore, President Kennedy urged that Bolling be used for a permanent international trade center, an idea with strong local support.

Whether Mr. Moore helps his chief make such decisions, the new administrator is not saying. He can, however, considerably facilitate or impede sensible community uses of surplus Government property by his policy in this area.

Note on Architecture

Architecture of Federal buildings, and consequently the mood of the central city, also can be fixed in large measure by Mr. Moore. He believes in variety of design, gauged to function, community atmosphere and beauty.

"Are you satisfied generally with the architecture of Federal buildings in Washington?" he was asked. "Should we economize more? Should we build grander buildings? Should GSA integrate Federal buildings more with local redevelopment and renewal programs?"

"I am no architect, as you may know, so in answer to the first part of your question I speak only as a citizen," Mr. Moore replied.

"In architecture I am not an advocate of the classic, the traditional or the modern—I recognize the merits of all of them. I like the grandeur and solidity of the more massive buildings on the Federal Triangle and believe that any future construction in that area should complement that which already is there—as the new Museum of History and Technology is designed to do.

"However, in other parts of the city, as those bordering on or within areas for redevelopment, I think that the architecture, as well as economy and efficiency of Government operations, a functional style of architecture is appropriate since the area will develop along contemporary lines.

"I sincerely believe there is room for some variety in the architectural treatment of new Federal buildings. Whichever style we select in a given area should be appropriate, pleasing to the eye, suitable to the function, the building will perform, and a credit to the community," he added.

"As for a tie-in with local redevelopment, we are doing that right now."

Some New Buildings

Three new buildings—at Fourth, Sixth, C streets and Maryland avenue S.W.; at Second, Third and D streets S.W., southwest of the Health, Education and Welfare Department, and along Independence avenue between Sixth and Ninth streets S.W.—all were located to encourage building and set the tone of the southwest urban renewal area.

"In selecting future sites, we will certainly keep renewal plans in mind," Mr. Moore promised.

He promised, too, to watch Federal construction on the east side of Lafayette Square. Attempts still under way locally and in Congress to save the Dolly Madison and Benjamin Tayloe houses and the old Belasco Theater there have not impressed Mr. Moore.

They hardly could be expected to, since President Kennedy and Congress favor building new executive offices there. Mr. Moore seems determined, however, to carry out his responsibilities under the law to plan a building with garden areas, setbacks and materials designed to retain the atmosphere of the historic square across Pennsylvania avenue from the White House.

"I believe that Lafayette Square can be vastly improved by flanking it with new buildings carefully designed and executed to preserve its character," he said. Mr. Moore, shortly after assuming office, hiked around the square with an artist friend of the President's to assess the area and designs for a new building there.

Few Outside Interests

Mr. Moore says his work leaves little time for other interests, although he and his wife are ardent football fans. He played himself, end and guard, for Villanova, where he was graduated in 1926. He is now 58. He also attended Pennsylvania State, University of Maryland and Westchester (Pa.) State Teachers' College, studying public administration and education. He coached football at Drexel Institute of Technology.

In 1950, he joined the University of Pennsylvania administration as controller, became acting business manager in 1954 and, later that year, vice president. He was born in Greeley, Nebr.

In a sense, his work at GSA is similar to his experience at the University of Pennsylvania, where he was in charge of purchases, personnel and construction.

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